

## **Future Leaders of America's Gulf (FLAG) Receives Gulf Guardian Award**

**(STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – June 9, 2011)** – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that the High School youth organization, Future Leaders of America's Gulf (F.L.A.G.) of Houma, Louisiana, will receive a Gulf Guardian Award for 2011 in the Youth Education Category. The Awards ceremony will be held in conjunction with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Meeting on August 3, 2011, beginning at 6 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Westin New Orleans Canal Place in New Orleans.

"Future Leaders of America's Gulf" (F.L.A.G.) is a non-profit organization formed by high school students focused on educating and informing youth on the plight of the Gulf Coast region. It was formed shortly after the oil spill and is increasingly active today. Louisiana area high school students continually join the effort to become civically involved and learn about the Gulf region that we all call home. As high school students and concerned citizens of America's Gulf Coast, the mission of F.L.A.G. is to give the youth of the Gulf Coast a voice to express their thoughts and opinions on the decisions being made today that will affect their future tomorrow. F.L.A.G. aims to keep the coastal youth educated and up to date on current events regarding these issues, using social networking and other means that are effective in reaching high school students. This unique group of High School students strives to educate, raise awareness, and influence public opinion (particularly high school students and future leaders) in a non-partisan manner, on issues that will shape the future of the Gulf Coast. They strive to convey to the public the importance of the natural, coastal, and human resources of the Gulf Coast. F.L.A.G. has participated with and presented to the Coastal Caucus of Environmental Legislators; United States Senator Mary Landrieu; former Lieutenant Governor Scott Angelle; Governor Bobby Jindal; the Regional Environmental Educators Roundtable held in Dallas, Texas; Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus; and John Hankinson, the Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, an entity established by an Executive Order from the President.

The Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. First, second and third place awards are given in seven categories: individual, business, youth environmental education, civic/nonprofit organizations, cultural diversity/environmental justice, partnership and bi-national efforts.

"The Gulf Guardian Award winners demonstrate great examples of collaborative efforts leading to solutions that address the Gulf of Mexico environment," said EPA Regional Administrator Al Armendariz. "Their accomplishments are making a positive difference in protecting and restoring the Gulf, and EPA is pleased to recognize their environmental stewardship."

The Gulf of Mexico Program began in 1988 to protect, restore, and maintain the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in economically sustainable ways. The Gulf of Mexico Program is underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, environmentalists, and community leaders from all five Gulf States. The Gulf Program seeks to improve the environmental health of the Gulf in concert with economic development.

Gloria Car, Acting Director of the Gulf of Mexico Program said, "This is the 11th year of the Gulf Guardian Awards Program, and I am proud to say that each year the winners in all categories have represented the very best of environmental accomplishments in the Gulf of Mexico. The partnership of the Gulf of Mexico Program works to improve the environmental health of the Gulf, and the Gulf Guardian Awards is an important way for us to recognize these valuable efforts. The 2011 award winners truly exemplify the enthusiastic and committed citizens, communities, governments, and businesses who address complex problems to improve, protect, and sustain our regional and national treasure, the Gulf of Mexico.

For more information regarding F.L.A.G., Contact: Vincent Cannata at (985) 855-6598 or [info@laflag.org](mailto:info@laflag.org).

*Editor's Note: For more information about the Gulf Guardian Awards and the Gulf of Mexico Program, call the Gulf of Mexico Program Office at 228-688-3726 or visit our web site at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>.*